

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2024

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell,

We are concerned that the Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon Claims Office (Claims Office) has failed to meet the congressionally mandated 180 day deadline to provide a decision to over 100 claimants on their cases. We urge you to expedite the process to get the Claims Office the staff and resources they need to address this serious issue and provide New Mexicans with the compensation they deserve and desperately need.

Our legislation, the Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon Fire Assistance Act (P.L. 117-180), mandated that the Claims Office settle each claim within 180 days and called for "expeditious consideration and settlement of claims". We have been alerted that the Claims Office has missed the 180 day deadline on over 100 claims and expects to reach the deadline on many more in the coming weeks. It is clear that the Claims Office is incredibly understaffed and needs a substantial increase in the number of claims reviewers to help with the backlog immediately.

It is our understanding that FEMA headquarters will place employees on temporary assignment to help the Claims Office reduce the backlog and streamline the claims process. It is paramount that new claims reviewers brought on during this process are trained to understand that they are not insurance adjusters trying to save money. Rather, their job is to use the resources Congress provided them to fully satisfy claims and provide justice for those who have lost so much.

The people of northern New Mexico endured unimaginable suffering at the hands of the federal government which started the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. We urge you to do everything in your power to expedite the process to compensate claimants.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your ongoing efforts to bring justice to northern New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A black ink handwritten signature, appearing to be 'M. Heinrich', with a stylized, cursive script.

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

A blue ink handwritten signature, 'Ben Ray Luján', written in a clear, cursive script.

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

A black ink handwritten signature, 'Teresa Leger Fernández', written in a cursive script.

Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress